ASPERT

Bulletin | AUG 2026

AOTEAROA AUSTRALIA PANCREATIC ENZYME REPLACEMENT THERAPY RESEARCH GROUP

FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

AMANDA LANDERS



IN THIS ISSUE

#whereismypancreas ...The Roadshow is Coming!

Behind the Lens: Our Patient Testimonial Video Shoot

FREE Education for Hospice Teams - Spread the Word!

ASPERT Research At A Glance

Team Spotlight

Tēna koutou katoa,

Even in the depths of a Christchurch winter, things have been anything but quiet for ASPERT! This edition of our bulletin is bursting with updates, and I hope you find as much to be excited about as we do.

Our EPI/PEI-SS study continues to grow, with recruitment well underway in Aotearoa New Zealand and now gaining momentum in Australia. It has been a privilege to welcome our Australian participants and collaborators into the fold, and we look forward to sharing further updates as recruitment progresses at both the Jreissati Pancreatic Centre and Flinders Medical Centre.

This issue also marks an exciting milestone for ASPERT beyond the research itself. In November, we are taking to the road — literally — with the #WhereIsMyPancreas Roadshow, a 19-day campervan journey the length of Aotearoa, culminating on World Pancreatic Cancer Day. I hope you will follow along, share our location posts, and help us spread the word far and wide.

We are also thrilled to share the story behind our patient testimonial video shoot — a day that reminded all of us, very powerfully, why this work matters.

Elsewhere in this issue, Helen and I are delighted to announce free online education sessions for hospice teams across Aotearoa — please do pass this on to anyone in your network who works in hospice care.

As always, none of this happens without you. On behalf of the ASPERT team, thank you for being in our corner!

Ngā mihi nui,
Amanda

University of Otago ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA
NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST UNIVERSITY

UTS Cancer Symptom Trials (CST)

Pancreatic Cancer Aotearoa New Zealand

Nurse Maude

#WHEREISMYPANCREAS — THE ROADSHOW IS COMING!

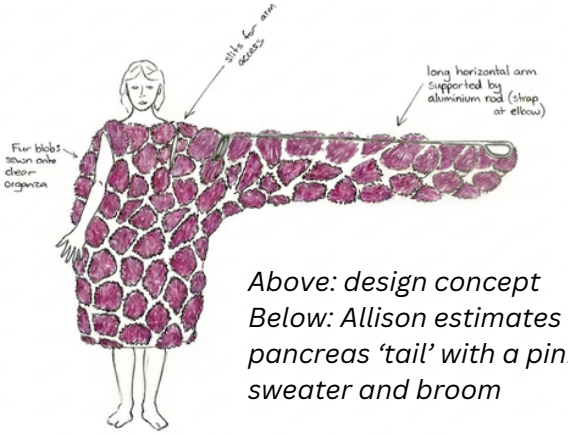
ALLISON LOVE

This November, ASPERT is hitting the road. The #WhereIsMyPancreas Roadshow is a 19-day campervan journey around Aotearoa New Zealand, culminating in Auckland on World Pancreatic Cancer Day — 19 November 2026. The mission: to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer, PERT, and ASPERT's ongoing research, one town at a time.

But first — the pancreas itself.

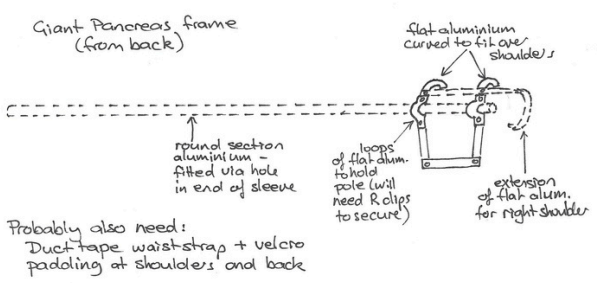
At the heart of the roadshow is a wearable fabric pancreas costume, currently being crafted by the multi-talented Fieke Neuman, Anatomy Laboratory Manager at the University of Otago Dunedin. Fieke is no stranger to bringing anatomy to life through fabric and textile — her previous creations include a burlesque brain made of layers of different fabrics and metals, a peritoneum in a box, and string board axon tracts — all designed to help students understand three-dimensional anatomy by getting their hands on it. You can explore her full portfolio of anatomy teaching models at anatomy-teaching-models.wiki.otago.ac.nz, and read more about her remarkable work in this 2015 University of Otago feature.

The ASPERT pancreas costume is being constructed from crystal organza, faux fur, and an internal aluminium frame — complete with a telescoping arm so it can be worn comfortably on the road. We are incredibly grateful to Fieke for donating her time and unique skillset to this project.



Above: design concept
Below: Allison estimates size of pancreas 'tail' with a pink sweater and broom





Above: sketch of internal frame
Below: internal frame detail



The van.
The roadshow will travel in Research Assistant Allison Love's family Mitsubishi Delica D5, which is getting a vehicle graphic makeover — kindly donated in full by the fantastic Toby Marsh at Universal Sign Co in Christchurch.



We are deeply grateful for Toby's generosity and excited to see the finished result out on the road.

Events along the way.
We are planning two special events during the roadshow — one in Wellington (Weds, 11 November) and one in Auckland on Thursday, 19 November, World Pancreatic Cancer Day itself. We will share more details as these take shape. If you're reading this bulletin update, you are invited!

The roadshow will pass through small towns and big cities the length of the country. If you have ideas about places we should visit, people we should talk to, or local pancreatic cancer community connections we should know about, please get in touch — we'd love to hear from you!

Prizes and giveaways.
Along the way, we'll be running daily social media location-guessing competitions, with prizes up for grabs — including the chance to win one of our iconic Mitre 10 CREON keyring capsules!



A grand prize will also be drawn on World Pancreatic Cancer Day — details to come.

Can you help?
We are currently seeking prize sponsors for our grand prize gift pack. Sponsors will be featured on the van graphics — a rolling billboard travelling the length of the country for nearly three weeks! If you or your organisation would like to contribute a prize or get involved, please contact us at aspert@otago.ac.nz.

And of course — if you'd like to come and meet the pancreas and grab a selfie (maybe inside the pancreas costume!) keep an eye on our social media pages for location updates as the roadshow unfolds.

If you don't know where your pancreas is... in November, it just might come find you!

BEHIND THE LENS: OUR PATIENT TESTIMONIAL VIDEO SHOOT

ALLISON LOVE

On Thursday 16 July, the ASPERT team spent a full and memorable day in Ōtautahi Christchurch, filming a patient testimonial video to support our study recruitment efforts.

The shoot was led by videographer Anna Frances Pearson, alongside camera operator Nick Kowalski (below).



We began the morning with Amanda and Helen — filmed together discussing PERT, pancreatic cancer, and the importance of the research — before heading out across the city to film in the homes of two of our study participants, Dean and Eric, who so generously opened their doors and shared their personal experiences with us.



We were also fortunate to speak with Christchurch resident John, who shared his own experiences with pancreatic cancer. John was referred to our project by Briony at PCANZ — ngā mihi, Briony!

The day was blessed with good weather and even better energy. It is one thing to work in research and understand intellectually why this work matters. It is another thing entirely to sit in someone's home and hear them speak — in their own words, on camera — about what it has meant to live with pancreatic cancer, and why they chose to give their time to help others. Our team came away from the shoot deeply moved and more motivated than ever!

Our heartfelt thanks go to our awesome film team, Anna and Nick, and to everyone who gave their time on the day — Dean, Eric, and whānau, John, Amanda, Helen, Fiona! We look forward to sharing clips of the video soon, once the editing is finished, and participants have given their final approval.



FREE EDUCATION SESSIONS FOR HOSPICE TEAMS — SPREAD THE WORD!

Amanda and Helen are offering a free 30-minute online education session for hospice teams across Aotearoa New Zealand — and we'd love your help getting the word out.

The sessions are designed to be concise and practical - a conversation about the nutritional challenges of pancreatic cancer, the role of PERT in symptom management and quality of life, and tips for supporting patients and whānau.

Amanda will also briefly introduce the ASPERT Tool Study, which some hospice patients may be eligible to participate in.

ASPERT RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

An update on ASPERT'S active research projects:

1. EPI/PEI-SS Study (thepancreasproject.com)

A study testing a new symptom-based scoring tool to help clinicians cheaply and quickly identify Pancreatic Exocrine Insufficiency (PEI)

STAGE: RECRUITMENT

We now have 30 participants who have completed the study in New Zealand. Our partner site at Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth has successfully recruited 10 participants who are very close to, or have already completed the study. The study recently opened at a new site at Flinders Medical Centre. The effort here is being spearheaded by Yuexian (Selena) Schultz who is a Senior GI Surgery Dietitian.

---

2. Implementation RCT

The ASPERT team has applied for major funding to conduct a clinical trial that will test whether structured, evidence-based implementation strategies can reliably improve patient access to PERT and nutritional care within cancer services across NZ and AU.

STAGE: PLANNING

ASPERT has employed a research assistant to help with grant applications. We recently submitted an EOI for the HRC Project grants of New Zealand. We will find out if successful for full application in October.

---

3. National Survey Study

A survey study in which people with pancreatic cancer across NZ and AU reported directly on their experiences with PERT — including if they had heard of it, accessed it, and found it helpful.

National Survey Study (con't)

STAGE: DATA ANALYSIS / WRITE-UP

Data collection is complete. Our research assistant Fiona will hopefully assist with manuscript writing from June, with further input from the wider team to follow.

4. Upper GI Audit

An audit examining how PERT is prescribed and managed for patients with upper gastrointestinal cancers — including oesophageal and gastric cancers — a group at significant risk of PEI that can sometimes be overlooked.

STAGE: MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION

Four sites have contributed data: Waikato, Hospice Southland, Nurse Maude, and South Canterbury — totalling approximately 250 patients, including around 50 with oesophageal cancer and 40 with gastric cancer. A team member is currently leading manuscript preparation, with data analysis the immediate next step.

---

5. NET Scoping Review

A scoping review of the published evidence on PEI and PERT in patients with Neuroendocrine Tumours (NETs) — a cancer group that frequently develops PEI but whose specific needs are not yet well-documented.

STAGE: SEARCHES UNDERWAY

Work on this review has recently recommenced, with approximately 173 abstracts identified. Two reviewers will be needed for the screening phase, which is the team's next step.

TEAM SPOTLIGHT

MEGHANA BANDLAMUDI

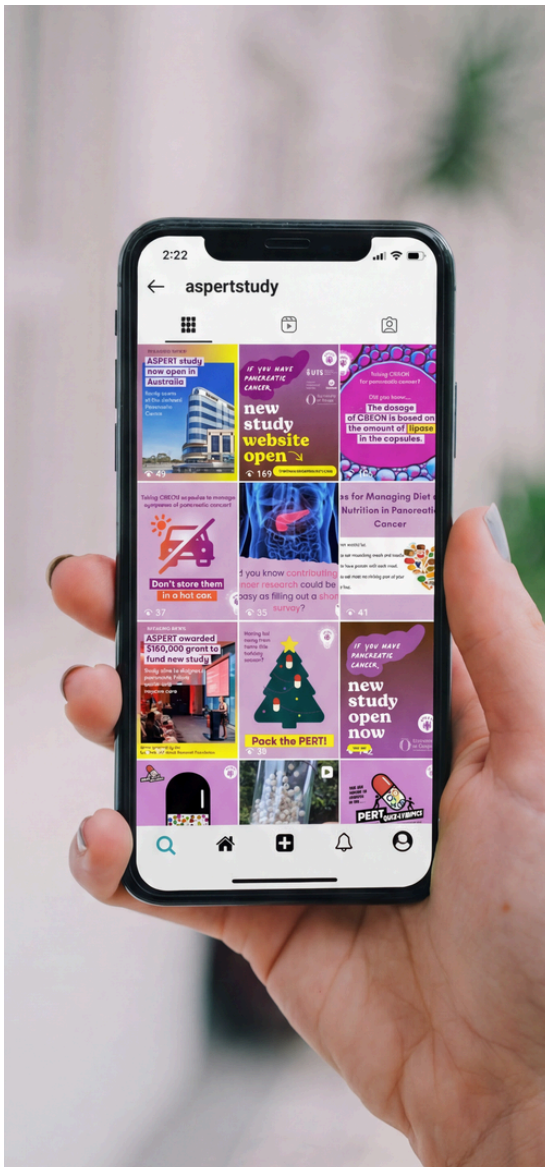


The ASPERT team is pleased to welcome Meghana Bandlamudi, a Research Assistant at the University of Otago, Christchurch. Meghana joined the team in February 2026 and is supporting research to improve the use of PERT for people with PEI.

She brings both qualitative and quantitative research skills to the team, contributing to several ASPERT projects — including statistical analyses for the Upper GI Audit Study.

Meghana completed her Master of Health Science at the University of Auckland in 2026, with research focused on ethnic differences in blood cancer outcomes. She also brings experience in public policy research, including work examining vaping and smoking policies in New Zealand.

Outside of work, Meghana enjoys reading, training for fitness events, and taking on new challenges. She is currently fundraising for a global health charity by competing in HYROX Melbourne and working towards conquering her fear of water as she trains for her first half-Ironman. She is excited to be part of the ASPERT team and looks forward to contributing to its mission of improving quality of life for people living with pancreatic cancer.



LET'S BE FRIENDS!

ASPERT has Facebook and Instagram profiles! Follow us to keep up to date with all things ASPERT.
FACEBOOK: @aspertresearch
INSTAGRAM: @aspertstudy
LINKEDIN: linkedin.com/in/aspertregistry

Subscribe or find out more by emailing Amanda Landers:
E: aspert@otago.ac.nz
W: uts.edu.au/aspert